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ABSTRACT

Career education, viewed as a comprehensive educational program focusing on skill development in vocational, leisure, and personal tasks, should begin with handicapped students at the elementary level. Elements of such a program include awareness of self, career, economics, decision making skills, and employability skills. Career education should begin with a cooperative home/school effort, in which the schools provide career guidance and counseling. Parents may avail themselves of resources outside the school to aid in their child's career development. (CL)

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AN INTRODUCTION TO CAREER EDUCATION AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL:

With Parent, School and Community Involvement

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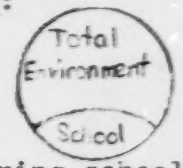
WHAT IS CAREER EDUCATION?

It is a comprehensive educational program for all learners regardless of sex, age, race or ability, which focuses on careers via the development of skills necessary to fulfill basic needs in the areas of work, leisure, and personal development. It is the totality of experiences through which one learns about and prepares to engage in work as part of one's way of life.

WHAT IS A CAREER?

A career is an active, life-long committment which is productive in nature. It may include both paid and unpaid work and may require different types of training for the various positions held during one's lifetime.

CAREER EDUCATION SETTING:



Career Education during school years comprises only one facet of development that changes with the individual's interests, life phases, etc. Education includes more than the formal educational system. Because one's career and one's education extend from preschool through retirement years, Career Education must also span almost the entire life cycle.

CAREER ELEMENTS:

Self-awareness: Realistic understanding of one's aptitudes, interests, temperament and values; this leads to a positive self-identity.

Educational awareness: Recognition of the relevancy of education to the real world. The basic three R's are needed in life.

Career awareness: There are many careers requiring various skills.

Economic awareness: Relationship of career to economic benefits and lifestyle.

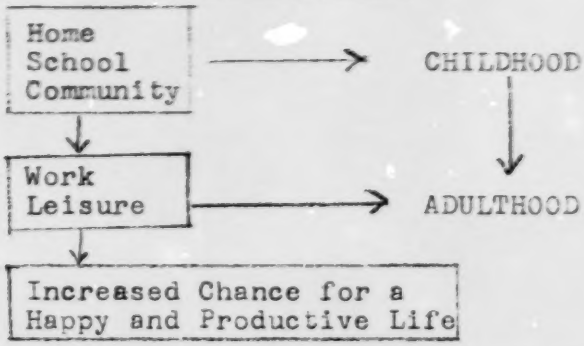
Decision-making skills: Process of making educated, rational choices.

Beginning competency and skill awareness: Development of the ability to perform tasks needed to begin work.

Employability skills: Development of social and communication skills to enable a student to begin work.

Attitudes and appreciation: Development of a value system that leads to job committment and successful performance with peers.

CAREER EDUCATION TIME LINE:



Career Education for Exceptional Students who have unique traits and learning characteristics should begin with a cooperative home/school effort and continue throughout life. This includes involving parents, school personnel and community resources, in the development of the "Career Elements" previously mentioned.

SCHOOL'S ROLE:

The school has an obligation of continuing the career education process that should begin at home. This process continues when the child enters elementary school and not junior high as the practice so often is in our schools today. A simple system of guidance and

counseling runs concurrently with career-related academic instruction and skill development. The student leaves school prepared to make rational career choices, possessing skills to enter the job market.

The multi-faceted process of choosing a career suited to individual needs necessitates providing enough time for its proper development. This process must begin when a student first enters school.

Individuals find meaning in their lives through their accomplishments. Since work is a major component of one's life, it stands to reason that the ability to make a decision regarding career choice is a crucial life factor. Teachers can help guide students in making realistic career choices. Career Education for Exceptional Students is VITAL!

PARENT'S ROLE:

Parents should become involved in the Career Education process through their home, school and community.

Parents and teachers should form a strong working "partnership" where communication through exchange of ideas and problems can be an effective means of promoting Career Education for handicapped children and youth. Existing school and community resources, such as the guidance department, P.T.A. and parent volunteers, can be utilized. Parents can be our greatest resource!

Where can you turn for help?:

The Director of Special Education in your local school district will help you to arrange for appropriate services for your child.

Your State Department of Education is committed to the education of handicapped children. The Director of Special Education and staff

can answer your questions about your state's plan for Special Education, state laws and procedures for obtaining services. Many states have special manuals explaining steps to take in order to obtain special schooling for students with disabilities. Check to see if one is available. Your State Department of Education needs to know if your handicapped child is not receiving appropriate services.

According to Federal Law, 10% of federal funds allocated to states for Vocational Education must be used to finance career and job preparation for handicapped students. This office can tell you how funds are being spent and what programs are available.

All states have Vocational Rehabilitation agencies to help handicapped persons so that they can become employable. Services include medical, therapeutic, counseling, education and training to help the disabled person find work. Your state Vocational Rehabilitation Agency will tell you about available services nearest your home.

Other agencies may be available within your state to help you with specific problems. A call or letter to the State Department of Education or Govenor can put you in touch with help that is available.

Additional information on relevent sources of assistance in your state is available from:

Closer Look Information Center
1201 16th Street N.W.
Washington D. C. 20036

If you come up against some problems and do not know how to proceed, you may write to:

Clearinghouse on the Handicapped
Department of Education
Room 3006-Switzer Building
Washington D. C. 20202

They will do their best to connect you with the service you need, if it is available.

The Division of Career Development, (DCD), of the Council for Exceptional Children,(CEC), focuses on career development for exceptional children, youth and adults through the utilization of teaching, counseling, and community interventions. DCD welcomes parent and teacher involvement. To find out the closest DCD Chapter to you or how to begin one, please write to the:

Division on Career Development
c/o Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, Virginia 22091

Other National Organizations interested in Career Development for the handicapped are the:

American Vocational Association
Special Needs Group, (NAVESNAP)
2020 North 14th Street
Arlington, Virginia 22201

National Rehabilitation Association-
(Vocational Education and Work Adjustment Association, VEWAA)
633 South Washington Street.
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

National Center for Research and Vocational Education
The Ohio State University
1960 Kenny Road
Columbus, Ohio 43210

American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities Inc., (ACCD)
1200 15th Street, N.W.
Suite 201
Washington D.C. 20005

CONCLUSION

Career Education for the handicapped is an area of concern to all persons involved with exceptional children, youth and adults

today in our work-oriented society. The main problem we wish to address is beginning Career Education early enough in a student's life, through the cooperative efforts of students, parents, teachers and community.

Elements of Career Education, such as self-awareness, attitudes towards work, decision-making skills, and employability skills, must be dealt with early in each student's life. This training will provide a valuable beginning, that will shape each student's attitudes and behavior toward the "working world."

Career Education brings meaningfulness to the learning and practice of basic academic skills, by demonstrating to students the multitude of ways in which these skills are applied in work and daily living. Career Education offers a significant dimension of relevance, practicality and motivation to students and teachers. It answers the frequently asked question, "What am I learning this for?"

Career Education at the Elementary Level need not cost anything. Through the use of available resources in the school, home and community, handicapped students are exposed to the "working world." Career-related activities can be easily integrated into every subject including math, reading, spelling, science, and social studies.

It's important to know the scope and sequence of the Career Education Philosophy, but this knowledge is not enough! Implementation is the key to success! It would benefit you to become involved in the Career Education Process previously mentioned.

WHY?

Don't you want students to be better motivated and more interested in educational programs? Don't you want young people to leave school

prepared to take their place in society? Don't you want taxpayers to get a better return on their financial investment? Join together with other parents and teachers. Get involved!

WE NEED YOU!